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DIRECTORATE OF  
INTELLIGENCE

# Intelligence Memorandum

*Recent Communist Logistical and Manpower  
Developments in Indochina*

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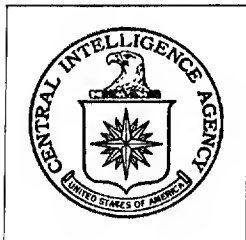
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**Recent Communist Logistical  
and Manpower Developments in Indochina**

During the past week the North Vietnamese continued to implement the third phase of this dry season's logistic program. However, we have our first tenuous signs that the infiltration of combat personnel may have come to an end for this dry season.

The heaviest supply activity is concentrated in southern Laos and northern South Vietnam. Some significant supply activity directed toward both northern Laos and South Vietnam also continues to be detected in southern North Vietnam.

- In Quang Tri Province, rear services units reported on 21 and 22 March that they had moved 1,100 tons of rice and ordnance, and heavy ordnance deliveries have continued since then. A major supply effort in the A Shau Valley area is under way.
- In southern Laos, "large convoys" of vehicles are headed south, and one logistics unit is handling 50 to 60 trucks daily.
- The heavy pace of activity is continuing through the tri-border area into the Central Highlands and south through eastern Cambodia to South Vietnam.

On the manpower side, the dispatch of infiltrators from North Vietnam appears to have decreased sharply. A major personnel infiltration support unit in the Laotian Panhandle may have completed its dry season mission. Some 500 special-purpose personnel started to move through the system. Highlighting other activity:

- The 308th NVA Infantry Division probably had redeployed to North Vietnam by late January 1973, representing the first known relocation of a major NVA combat unit out of South Vietnam since the beginning of the 30 March 1972 Offensive.
- An antiaircraft regimental headquarters and its two battalions completed a post-cease-fire deployment to South Vietnam.

**Note:** Comments and queries regarding this publication are welcomed. They may be directed to

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## DISCUSSION

## Recent Communist Logistical Developments in Indochina

*Logistical Activity in Southern North Vietnam*

1. Detected logistic activity in the Vinh area increased somewhat during the past week but remains at a relatively low level -- characteristic of the traditional pace for this time of year. Intercepted messages from Binh Tram 18 revealed that supplies are moving both west (toward northern Laos) and south (toward South Vietnam) from the Vinh area. On 24 March, it was reported that 50 vehicles carrying more than 150 tons of supplies -- mostly food but also small quantities of ammunition and explosives -- had been dispatched from Vinh to northern Laos. On 21 March, about 100 tons of cargo were detected being sent from Vinh southward. An intercept the day before had revealed that almost 200 tons of cargo, presumably southbound, were being offloaded from barges in the Binh Tram 25 area (south of Vinh).

2. A transportation mission involving at least two transshipment points in the Binh Tram 25 area was discussed several times in enemy communications during the week. Vehicles were shuttling cargo from the two points, and it may be that the storage areas were being cleaned out and supplies consolidated elsewhere. By 22 March, communications revealed that the cargo at one of the storage areas "has been completely depleted."

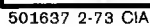
3. In the southern North Vietnam Panhandle, elements of Binh Tram 26 (near Dong Hoi) were engaged in relatively heavy resupply activity. A series of 21 March intercepts revealed that barges had been dispatched to a storage area to pick up about 100 tons of rice. The same day, 96 vehicles were noted transiting the Binh Tram's area of operations. Binh Tram 26 was also noted distributing weapons and equipment to some units. Adverse weather conditions have been causing some backup of cargo in the Binh Tram 26 area. On 25 March the Binh Tram revealed that 600 tons of cargo, including about 45 tons of ordnance and the remainder rice, remained unloaded from a barge because of the heavy rains. In addition, because of the rains and resultant slippery road conditions, vehicles were encountering difficulties in moving cargo out of storage areas.

*Logistical Activity in Laos and Cambodia*

4. During the past week, substantial quantities of supplies continued to move into Laos, and there were signs that North Vietnam is preparing the trail for wet season activity. [REDACTED] a 50% increase

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in southbound movements through the input corridors -- principally the Ban Karai Pass -- and on 24 March [ ] the highest level of vehicle activity this dry season. Adding to the heavy concentration of activity at Ban Karai Pass, a flow of supplies west of the DMZ continued as did a trickle through Mu Gia Pass. (Mu Gia is traditionally the first cross-border route to close down operations, and it appears to be doing so now.)

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5. The recent surge in southbound detections follows a week to ten days in which [ ]

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[ ] more northbound than southbound movements were counted). It now appears that the northward bias reflected the return of some of the very large number of vehicles which entered Laos during the preceding month. When back, they could pick up more cargo to move south, and the current return to a southward bias suggests that is what is occurring. Additional inputs of supplies to Laos should normally dwindle in the next month or so as the dry season draws toward its finish, but North Vietnam may be preparing for wet season resupply procedures. Recent photography revealed some road improvements and bridge building just south of Ban Karai and pontoon bridges were spotted near Ban Phone.

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6. Very heavy resupply activity continues within Laos and Cambodia as the North Vietnamese implement the third phase of their "General Transportation Offensive." The current phase -- scheduled to last through May -- is emphasizing supply movements south through Laos and into South Vietnam.

7. Numerous examples of heavy vehicle activity through the central Panhandle became available during the week. A 21 March intercept indicated that a logistical unit in the central Laos Panhandle would handle 50 to 60 trucks "every day." Several intercepts during the past week also referenced "the large convoys going south toward Group 471." On 24 March, one of the vehicle convoys headed to Group 471 included tanker vehicles carrying petroleum supplies south. On 21 March, Group 471 reported that it had dispatched 90 vehicles. Two days later, Binh Tram 34 near Ban Bac reported that it was loading eight vehicles with cargo -- possibly including ordnance -- to move south.

8. Some recent intercepts indicate that logistic units in the Group 472 area are preparing new petroleum storage facilities and providing hidden storage for other supplies. On 24 March, communications revealed that trenches were being dug along Routes 29 and 99, and storage tanks are apparently to be emplaced there. In a bomb-free environment, petroleum products can be stored in much greater bulk because the threat of explosions

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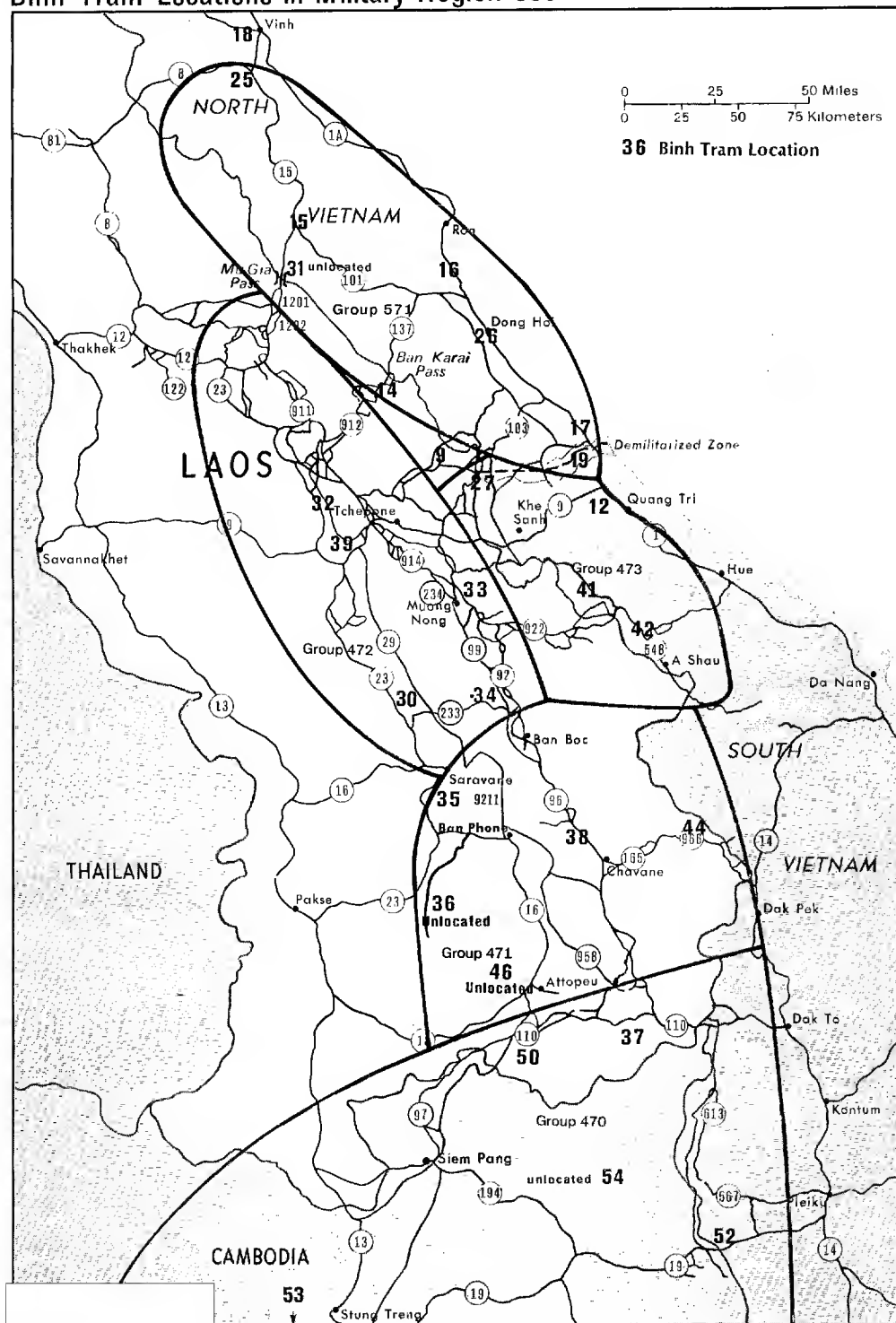
is greatly diminished. Also, the improvement of gasoline storage capabilities along major routes will ease supply activity. In this connection, recent communications from the 592nd Engineer Regiment (responsible for maintaining the petroleum pipeline which enters Laos west of the DMZ) revealed that preparations were under way to pump fuel to a storage facility, probably within Group 472's area. Also along Route 99, a "work project" is currently under way, which involves the dispersing and hiding of some cargo. Several weeks ago the North Vietnamese were anticipating inspection teams in the central Panhandle, and this campaign could reflect those expectations.

9. Vehicle activity remains heavy in the southern Laos/Cambodia border area. On 23 March, for example, a subordinate of Group 470 reported that 77 vehicles were "on the roads." Vehicles are transporting cargo from both Binh Tram 37 near the tri-border area and Binh Tram 51 in eastern Cambodia to the B-3 Front, and the supplies en route continue to include significant quantities of ammunition. Supply movements in the Group 470 area are proceeding by boat as well as by truck. Transportation has been hindered to some extent in the Group 470 area by the recent very sharp increase in US bombing in Cambodia, but for the most part widespread logistical activity from the southern Laos border to the widely spaced border crossing points along the Cambodia/southern South Vietnam border continues to be noted by aerial observers. On 13 March, Group 470 reported that the "enemy" had carried out reconnaissance missions and had concentrated strikes on its roads, bridges, and storage facilities. As a result, units were exhorted to keep the roads open to ensure vehicle traffic.

10. The pattern of current vehicle traffic flows through eastern Cambodia is normal for this time of year. Route 97/975 is supporting the bulk of cross-border traffic entering Cambodia. A major share is moving eastward onto Route 19 to the B-3 Front rear support area located astride the border of South Vietnam's MR 2. South of Stung Treng, vehicles have switched to a newly built road paralleling Route 13. The new road, which is well canopied, provides better protection from aerial surveillance and a more direct route to border base areas opposite MR 3.

11. Waterways are also being used to move supplies despite low water levels and hazards. Some obstacles apparently have been cleared and channel markers emplaced to guide vessels through some shallow sections. Some supplies are moving on the Tonle San River near the Cambodia/South Vietnam border, in addition to those moving on the Tonle Kong and Mekong. On the Mekong the VC/NVA are said to be employing some 30 flat-bottom motorboats, each capable of carrying 2 to 3 tons, to move ammunition and medical supplies from Kratie to offloading points below Chhlong. From Kratie, Chhlong, and other staging areas near the river,

# Binh Tram Locations in Military Region 559



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[redacted]

supply shipments proceed toward southern South Vietnam via roads into Snuol, Mimot, and Krek, all of which are reportedly being used to funnel supplies and equipment into South Vietnam.

***Logistical Activity in South Vietnam***

12. High levels of resupply activity continue in northern South Vietnam. Rear services elements report that 1,100 tons of rice and ordnance were being shipped between unidentified points in Quang Tri Province on 21 and 22 March. A number of intercepted messages from Binh Tram 12, in northern Quang Tri Province, showed that it is heavily involved in the effort. On 20 March, for example, an element of Binh Tram 12 revealed that it had delivered at least 130 tons of ammunition the previous day. Two days later, 46 trucks of one transportation battalion moved supplies -- including at least 60 tons of ammunition -- through the Binh Tram's area. The largest effort detected came on 25 March when elements of the Binh Tram handled 200 tons of ordnance. In addition, a large quantity of supplies is moving south from the Quang Tri area. On 23 March a logistic entity reported receiving 78 vehicles from Binh Tram 12 and other units -- most of the 250 tons of supplies they carried were weapons and ammunition.

13. Heavy activity was also apparent in the western sector of MR 1. On 20 March, Binh Tram 41, whose area of responsibility extends roughly from Khe Sanh to the A Shau Valley and spills over into Laos, reported that 70 vehicles had transited its area, half moving north and half south. Aerial photography during the week showed continued heavy use of roads all around Khe Sanh and south toward the A Shau Valley. At Khe Sanh, [redacted] a newly occupied SAM site -- two SA-2 missiles on launchers, radar, and other support equipment were observed at the new site. Three previously installed sites remained unoccupied. A major Communist supply push into and in the A Shau Valley is also apparent from both photography and COMINT. On Route 922, the main feeder road into the A Shau from Laos, 50 trucks were seen in [redacted] photography. The same day, COMINT revealed that Binh Tram 42, which operates in the Laotian border/A Shau area and on Route 922, received vehicles carrying more than 190 tons of weapons, ammunition, and explosives. In the northern A Shau, seven storage areas, newly constructed since the end of February and containing 32 buildings, were observed along Route 616. Signs of recent activity were evident, and stocks of supplies are stored openly.

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14. Further significant improvements to roads into the coastal lowlands of southern MR 1 were detected during the past week. In eastern Quang Tin Province, a new segment of road leading south from Route 534

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has been sighted by air observers. Route 534 has been used extensively to move supplies from Laotian border base areas to the NVA 711th Division -- including recently, 30 armed vehicles. Farther south, new construction activity is continuing along the new Communist road through western Quang Tin and Quang Ngai Provinces, and visual reconnaissance recently revealed a 17-truck convoy on the eastern part of the road.

15. In the Central Highlands of MR 2, the Communists have, since early March, constructed numerous ammunition caches along Route 19 in Pleiku Province.

16. The pace of Communist logistic activity remains brisk in South Vietnam's MR 3, particularly in northeastern Tay Ninh Province, where new road construction links the Route 246/244 system in Tay Ninh with Route 7 near Mimot, Cambodia. The new road is reportedly now being used to move rice stockpiled around Mimot into South Vietnam. West of Saigon, Communist units reportedly are preparing to receive additional supplies of modern weapons from Cambodia.

#### **Recent Manpower Developments in Indochina**

##### ***Personnel Infiltration***

17. There are tentative signs that Hanoi may be bringing its dry season infiltration program to a close. There have been no reports of regular infiltration groups leaving from North Vietnam since 4 March -- when intercepted messages indicated that two combat groups were to transit Vinh on 10 and 11 March. There are now some preliminary reports that at least one battalion of a major infiltration support unit in the Laotian Panhandle -- the 574th NVA Communications-Liaison Regiment -- has completed its dry season mission. Recent intercepts indicate that the unit will receive no more southbound "individual troops or groups." If the same is true of the regiment's other subordinates, it would probably signal the end of Hanoi's 1972/73 dry season effort through the Laotian Panhandle. At the same time, however, other regimental elements have been detected streamlining the infiltration route possibly for continued infiltration exclusively by vehicle -- which would require fewer communications-liaison personnel. The latter possibility is considered somewhat less likely with the approaching rainy season in the Panhandle -- traditionally a period of very low infiltration.

18. During the reporting period, a total of 17 special-purpose infiltration groups -- with an aggregate strength of 500 -- were noted moving south through the Vinh area. In addition to these firm detections of southbound special-purpose groups, a message of 20 March revealed the

existence of 345 "civilian administrators" traveling within Binh Tram 18's area of responsibility. Although no groups were specifically referenced, it appears likely that they were moving southward, primarily because references to "civilian administrators" have always denoted southbound personnel. Currently there are some 20,000 personnel in the infiltration pipeline, and an additional 15,000 have arrived at their destinations in South Vietnam, Cambodia, and southern Laos since 28 January.

19. The first tabulation below shows the pattern of infiltration starts of regular groups since 1 September, for both the 1972/73 and 1971/72 dry seasons. The recent lack of any detected regular groups beginning the trek south has widened the gap in starts between the two dry seasons from the 5,000 difference reported last week to some 7,500 personnel. The second tabulation depicts estimated starts of regular and special-purpose infiltration groups, by week, since 1 January. The estimates should be viewed as "soft" because precise data on the date of departure of many of the groups are not available.

#### Infiltration Starts by Season

Destination	1 Sep 72 - 25 Mar 73	1 Sep 71 - 25 Mar 72
<b>Total</b>	<b>86,500 ✓</b>	<b>94,000</b>
MR Tri-Thien-Hue	26,000	14,500
MR 5	9,000	17,000
B-3 Front	14,000	22,500
COSVN	26,500	31,500
Southern Laos/MR 559	11,000	8,500

#### Number of Personnel Entering the Pipeline Since 1 Jan 1973

	Total <sup>1</sup>	Special Purpose
1-7 Jan	4,500	200
8-14	3,500	150
15-21	6,000	400
22-28	4,000	150
29-4 Feb	6,000	100
5-11	3,000	150
12-18	2,000	850
19-25	200	200

**Number of Personnel  
Entering the Pipeline  
Since 1 Jan 1973**

(Continued)	Total	Special Purpose
26-4 Mar	700	700
5-11	1,300	300
12-18	50	50
19-25	500	500

1. Including gap-filled groups, except Groups 7001 through 7009, for which the 1973 dates of departure are uncertain, although they probably left prior to 11 March. If it is assumed that these groups departed between 15 February and 10 March, some 4,500 combat troops would be spread over the departures estimated for those weeks.

***VC/NVA Redeployments in South Vietnam***

20. Very recent evidence has revealed that the 308th NVA Infantry Division apparently had moved from Quang Tri Province to Ha Tinh Province in North Vietnam by late January 1973. This would be the first North Vietnamese division known to have returned to North Vietnam since the start of the Communist Spring Offensive on 30 March 1972.

21. The 308th Division – and its three subordinate regiments – were last firmly identified as all being in Quang Tri Province of South Vietnam in November 1972, and some elements of the division continued to be identified in Quang Tri as late as mid-February 1973. However, since at least late January the division's headquarters has been located in Ha Tinh Province, some 150 miles north of the DMZ. Other evidence

indicates that at least elements of all three of the division's regiments also were in Ha Tinh Province by late January. Subsequently, on 24 March the headquarters of the Division's 36th Regiment was located by direction finding in the Hanoi area.

22. As no units of the 308th have been heard from inside South Vietnam since mid-February, they too probably have left the country. The redeployment of the 308th Division to North Vietnam reduces the number of NVA divisions in MR 1 from eight to seven and the Communist combat order of battle there from 82,000 to 76,000.

# Communist and South Vietnamese Regular Combat Forces in South Vietnam

## South Vietnam

### Regular Combat Forces

VC/NVA <sup>1</sup>	RVNAF <sup>2</sup>
154,000	287,000

VC/NVA	RVNAF
76,000	85,000
325th	VNMC
324B	Airborne
320B	1st
312th	2nd
304th	3rd
711th	Regional Forces
2nd	

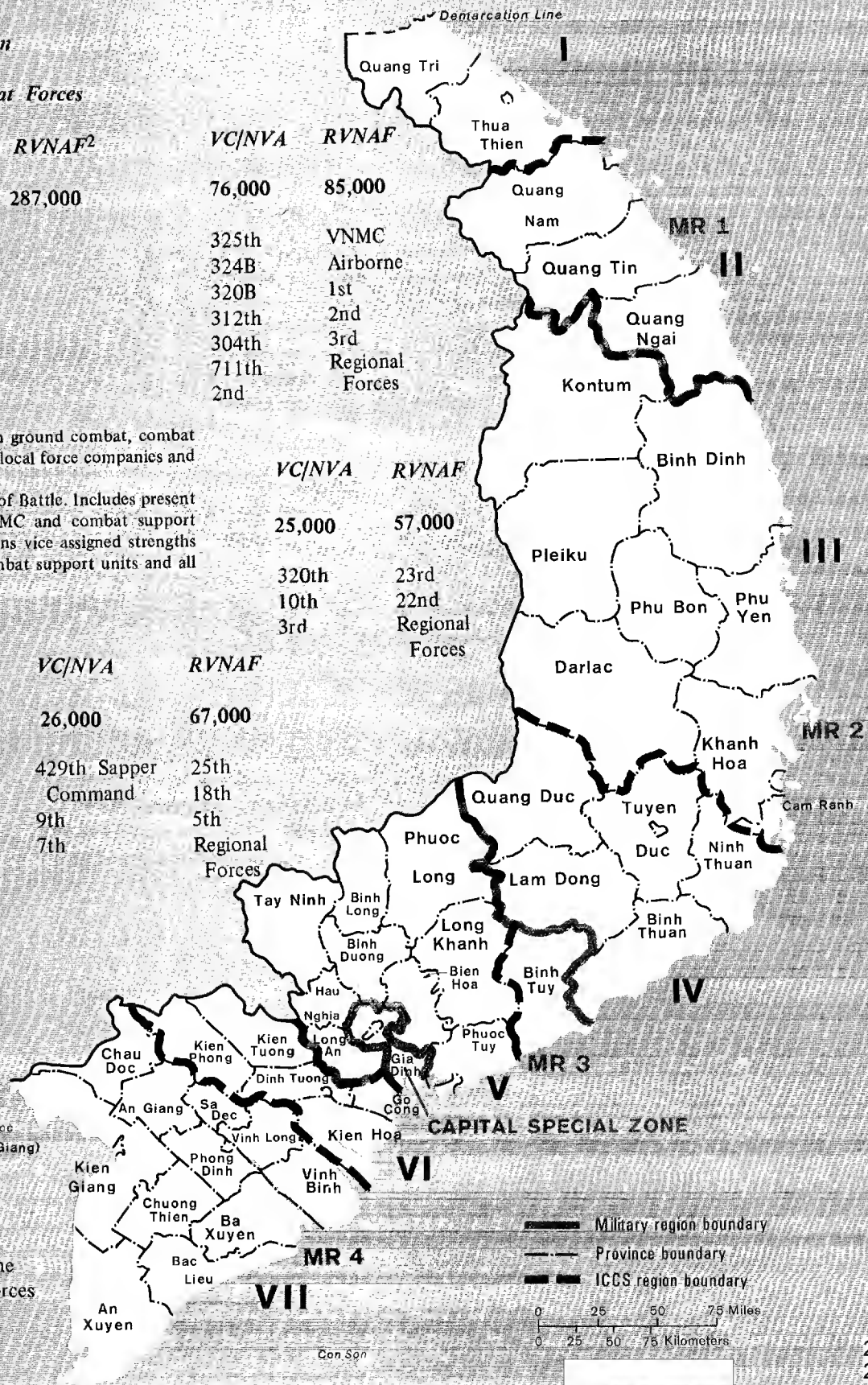
1. Includes VC/NVA personnel in ground combat, combat support, and air defense units and local force companies and platoons.

2. Revised RVNAF Ground Order of Battle. Includes present for duty personnel in ARVN/VNMC and combat support units, and Regional Force battalions vice assigned strengths of ARVN/VNMC combat and combat support units and all of the Regional Forces.

VC/NVA	RVNAF
26,000	67,000

429th Sapper Command	25th
9th	18th
7th	5th
	Regional Forces

VC/NVA	RVNAF
27,000	78,000
6th	21st
5th	9th
1st	7th
	44th Special Tactical Zone
	Regional Forces



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23. In another major deployment, the headquarters of the 593rd Antiaircraft Artillery (AAA) Regiment -- a GDRS unit which has operated in the northern part of the Laotian Panhandle since October 1972 -- and two of its at least four subordinate battalions -- the 10th and the 120th -- probably have deployed to South Vietnam. The other two battalions are probably still in southern Laos, one of which -- the 92nd -- was ordered to stop its deployment on 20 March. Because the 92nd Battalion was not identified as being destined for South Vietnam originally -- as were the 10th and 120th Battalions -- it cannot be determined if the 92nd's halting was in response to the President's warning. Currently, the battalion is believed to be operating in extreme southern Laos near the tri-border area.

24. COMINT of 21 March located the headquarters of the regiment in southwestern Kontum Province, 5 kilometers inside the South Vietnam/Cambodia border. Since at least mid-February, intercepted messages had indicated that the regimental headquarters and the 10th and 120th Battalions were moving south through the Laotian corridor en route to the B-3 Front. This is the first time that Hanoi has deployed a AAA regiment this far south in South Vietnam. Its arrival raises the in-country number of regiments to 17 -- 16 AAA and one SAM. The 593rd's mission may be to protect the logistical corridors into Kontum Province or to provide AAA coverage for the airfield near Dak To, which recently was improved by the Communists and now appears serviceable.

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